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ABSTRACT

The research, based on a March 1988 survey of all Ontario school boards (board and separate), was an attempt to identify and synthesize boards' employment equity/affirmative action policies and practices--in order to ensure that, ultimately, women are more equitably represented within the management positions in education. The findings of 52 boards for both policies and practices were categorized into four areas: (1) general and broad statements on employment equity; (2) statements specifically intended to assist women; (3) statements concerning hiring/recruitment/selection issues; and (4) statements aimed at eliminating systemic discrimination. The intention of this research was to provide this wealth of employment equity initiatives as an encouragement to other school boards, and to focus attention on the two diverse types of employment equity strategies: getting more women into those positions of added responsibility and keeping more women in those same positions. (7 references) (Author)

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EMPLOYMENT EQUITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARDS

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EMPLOYMENT EQUITY IN ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARDS -- POLICIES AND PRACTICES

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The research, based on a March 1988 survey of all Ontario school boards (board and separate), was an attempt to identify and synthesize boards' employment equity/affirmative action policies and practices -- in order to ensure that, ultimately, women are more equitably represented within the management positions in education. The findings of 52 boards for both policies and practices were categorized into four areas:

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EMPLOYMENT EQUITY IN ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARDS:

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

How is employment equity reflected within the school boards in Ontario? Specifically, what are the boards' policies and practices concerning employment equity? This paper describes the results of a 1988 survey of Ontario school boards in order to answer these questions.

One way of defining employment equity is the achievement and maintenance of a fair and representative work force. In order to attain this objective, two approaches must be taken simultaneously: one, to provide equal employment opportunity; and two, to correct the conditions of disadvantage experienced by women, aboriginals, people with disabilities, and persons who are, because of their race or colour, in a visible minority in Canada. As quoted by Judge Abella, "employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accomodation of differences" (Abella, 1987).

The findings reported in this paper deal only with employment equity/affirmative action for women -- policies and practices directed at achieving equality of <u>women</u> in the workplace. While the author recognizes the more encompassing nature of employment equity, only this one gender-related aspect was addressed through the research.

A The Provincial Context

One way of categorizing organizations is as open systems, entities affected by and also influencing their environments. School boards, as organizations then, are influenced by their environments, with one immediate or focal environment being the Ministry of Education. Moreover, one aspect of the environment to which organizations <u>must</u> respond is legislation, and in this case it could be both federal and provincial. Consequently, in order to place the employment equity policies and practices of Ontario school boards in some sort of context, a brief history of affirmative action/employment equity for women within Ontario is described below.

The initiatives directed to women employees within the Ontario Government, followed by those programs within the Ministry of Education are identified in the text below. The first noteworthy action occurred in 1973, when the Ontario Government published a Green Paper entitled Equal Opportunity for Women: A Plan for Action. Then, in 1974, the Ontario Government introduced the Affirmative Action for Women program within its Public Service. The objectives of the program were to provide equal opportunity for women, and to raise and diversify the occupational distribution of female employees. (The program's name has been since changed to Employment Equity, with its focus expanded in 1987 to include racial minorities, persons

with disabilities, Francophones, aboriginals, and natives.) In 1983, the Women's Directorate was established, responsibile to the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. And in 1986, the Ontario Government's affirmative action goal was a minimum of 30% female representation by the year 2000.

The responses by the Ministry of Education have been increasingly pronounced. In 1973, Wells, the Minister of Education informed school boards about the importance of equal employment and promotion opportunities for women. Then, in 1975, a Women's Advisory was appointed, followed by the establishment of the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Unit in 1979 (a Unit which spans two ministries -- the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities).

The year of 1984 was significant in terms of employment equity/affirmative action for the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Deputy Premier of Ontario and Minister for Women's Issues, Welch, spoke at the first Focus on Leadership Conference on Affirmative Action in Ontario School Boards in March. He reiterated the components of an affirmative action program, which were those stated by the federal government. His description of affirmative action was:

> a program to ensure that qualified women are admitted -- on an equal and competitive basis -- to all employment opportunities, and are given an equal opportunity to acquire the necessary qualifications and experience.

Following that speech, Stephenson, the then Minister of Education and Minister of Colleges and Universities, went further in her talk. She said that the Ministry was encouraging school boards to to:

a. adopt a formal policy of affirmative action for female employees;

b. appoint a senior staff member to develop and coordinate an affirmative action plan with goals and timetable for the hiring, promotion, and training of all female employees; and

c. collect and analyze data on occupational and salary distributions by gender, job competitions, the availability of future positions, the numbers of women and men who qualified for positions of added responsibility, and staff training and development.

Subsequently, the Minister of Education issued a statement that, school boards, starting in 1985, were required to provide affirmative action data in their September reports. And from January 1985 for a period of five years, Ontario school boards could have access to an incentive fund, a grant intended to assist boards in the development and implementation of employment equity/affirmative action programs for women.

In 1986, Sean Conway, the Education Minister wrote in Policy/Program Memorandum 92:

> The government is committed to the principle of employment equity. Nowhere is it more important that this principle be observed than in the province's educationasl system. The role of education and the values it reflects in both human resource deployment and curriculum is critical. Ministry of Education policy requires that students have the opportunity to see men and women in a variety of roles. The school system must be at the forefront in reflecting the changing roles of women and men by providing an environment that exemplifies sex equity, both in the role models it provides and the teaching materials it uses.

Accordingly, the Minister increased the funding; for a period of three years, beginning in January 1987 through until December 1989, each participating school board would be eligible to receive up to $51,000, providing the boards met certain conditions. Each receiving board had to submit a year-end report indentifying the actual results they have achieved with the grants. In addition, boards were requested to establish a goal of at least 30% representation of women in all positions by the year 2000; directors were expected to include affirmative action sections in their annual reports; and notice was given that the Education Act would be amended to required affirmative action policies for women in school boards.

It was within this setting that research to investigate the employment equity/affirmative action policies and practices of the school boards in Ontario was carried out.

Holdaway's definition of policy is used, where:

> "Policy" is generally viewed as official statements or unwritten understandings which guide people's actions and thus provide a frame of reference for making organizational decisions. Policy statements vary in their generality. Some are broad statements of principle; others are more specific.
>
> (Holdaway, 1983, p. 11)

Procedures are those statements which are required in order for policy to be carried out. Procedures do not necessarily ensure that policy <u>is</u> implemented; but without procedures, policy has no mechanisms for being translated into action.

Even with procedures, however, policy may not be carried out; procedures, initiatives, or planned actions may not be implemented. Moreover, certain practices may be more effective than others. It was not the intention of the research to determine the quantity or quality of the procedures. Rather, the objective of the research was to determine those policies and procedures on employment equity/affirmative action for women that

the school boards identified as being in existence.

B Methodology

First, a letter was sent to every director of education of the 126 public and separate school boards in Ontario. The request was for "copies of all policies and procedures (formal and informal) that exist within your school board which are intended deliberately to assist women and minority groups in their career advancement in education". The intention was for the school boards to provide the author with their employment equity/affirmative action policies and initiatives, the latter to include both institutional strategies as well as programs directed towards of for women and minority groups. In retrospect, the request was not as clear as it could have been. And, according to those respondents, a definition of employment equity/affirmative action should have been provided. None was given in order to encourage a wide array of responses to reflect, as Abella noted, that such programs be designed for the specific institution, as a combination of "what is necessary, what is fair, and what is workable" (Abella, 1987, p. 10).

Of the 126 letters sent in March 1988, responses were received from 52 (41%) of school boards. In most instances, the director referred the letter to the person who was in charge of such initiatives within the board. Thirty-seven or 71% of the boards indicated that they had either a formal or informal policy on or about employment equity. Three of the smaller school boards admitted that they had no policy. And a fourth indicated that its hiring and recruitment practices were currently under review. Thirty-five of those 37 boards had initiatives in place which were designed to carry out their employment equity/affirmative action policy.

C The Findings

The following statements illustrate the range of employment equity/affirmative action policy and initiatives that the school boards have undertaken. From the data, policies and initiatives were grouped into one of four categories:
(i) general statements on affirmative action/employment equity;
(ii) statements concerning recruitment, interviewing, hiring issues;
(iii) statements intended to assist women specifically; and
(iv) statements aimed at eliminating systemic discrimination.

I General policy and programs on affirmative action/employment equity.

The first set of policy statements deals with the broad issue of employment equity, with examples provided to illustrate policies having increased degrees of specificity:
-- This board is committed to achieving equal employment opportunity;

-- To respect the dignity and worth of all employees;
-- To maximize the utilization of human resources within the board;
-- To establish, realize, and monitor equal opportunities for men and women;
-- To make all employees aware of the equal opportunities available to them; and
-- To secure for women and men, justice, fairness, and equal opportunity for access and advancement.

The programs associated with this first category are many and diverse. Some examples illustrating the boards' initiatives are listed below.

1. A sexual harassment policy and procedures, to include a brochure, audio-visual materials, and a workshop for all employees.
2. The production of an academic employee status report, which includes a status audit (distribution by sex, turnover patterns, projected vacancies, qualifications of teaching staff, distribution of teaching staff, salary).
3. The development and circulation of a long-range plan of projected vacancies, in particular for positions of added responsibility, and growth areas so that employees can re-assess their career expectations and do some long-range career planning.
4. An evaluation of current needs, programs, and resources within the board, and from there to establish a staff development program to ensure a pool of competent candidates exist for future openings.
5. Making release time and other resources available for the in-service for the professional development of <u>all</u> employees.
6. The board provides a professional development day for all its employees to address employment equity issues.
7. A review of job classifications in terms of 'equal pay for work of equal value' legislation.
8. An Employment Equity Advisory Committee to provide a forum for discussion of pertinent matters and a vehicle for listening to and resolving employment equity issues.
9. The development of a resource lending library which includes information on such topics as career planning and development, leadership training, and women's issues.
10. Ensuring that the employment equity program is carried out by including employment equity in performance appraisal process for superintendents, principals, supervisors, and teachers.
11. Carrying out monitoring and evaluation procedures for employment equity for a five-year period.
12. A standardization of procedures and mechanisms used to bring information to the attention of staff, to ensure that all staff and itinerant teachers have equal access to information. Special bulletin boards or sections of same are set aside for staff news on career-related matters. Standard newsletters or public address announcements help further to provide information equally.
13. Preparation and distribution of an affirmative action/employment equity newsletter throughout the board on a regular basis, e.g, monthly.

14. Providing an orientation program for new supervisory staff.
15. Assessing the attitudes of supervisory personnel.
16. Having study groups to encourage and prepare staff members interested in taking the Supervisory Officers' examination, in both its written and oral components.
17. Supplying support, training, and opportunities to elementary vice-principals so that they are able to develop leadership skills in preparation for applying for principalships.
18. Providing all staff with an equal opportunity to develop their leadership potential through delegation, transfers, teacher exchange, job sharing, rotation of people in positions of leadership, and mentoring.

II Recruitment, interviewing, and selection policies and initiatives associated with affirmative action/employment equity.

The second type of policy statement is very prevalent among the responding boards. Those examples provided below again range from the general to the specific.
-- To recruit, assign, and promote on the basis of qualifications and merit and in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
-- Equal opportunity for advancement;
-- To recognize and encourage the leadership potential of all Board employees;
-- To recruit and select employees without discrimination;
-- Appointment to positions of responsibility and authority without discrimination;
-- Employment procedures and practices shall attempt to secure and retain the best qualified employees for all avaiable positions;
-- To have fair, open, and equal opportunity practices in hiring, training, evaluation, promotion, re-assignment, and termination;
-- To publish procedures for the recruitment, assignment, and promotion of all staff; and
-- Employment equity hiring policy to include the regulation that the primary consideration for hiring is given to qualifications, quality of output, and ability to perform satisfactority the duties of the position as outlined in job specifications.

Programs or initiatives related to the above named policies include:
1. The development and wide distribution of a job catalogue wherein all jobs and their accountabilities, qualifications, and skill requirements are listed to permit employees the opportunity to prepare themselves for positions of greater challenge, lateral mobility, or positions of added responsibility.
2. Sending memos, automatically, out to all schools regarding any changes in job requirements that would be relevant to employees. These changes would be mentioned at staff meetings as well.
3. The development and distribution of the non-discriminatory hiring selection procedures, selection criteria, and weightings of criteria for promotion.

4. The development and distribution of a selection procedures manual to specify clearly all the steps involved in applying for a position of added responsibility.
5. Assistance in preparing for getting to the interview stage by means of workshops/meetings on such topics as resume writing, interviewing skills, certification requirements.
6. Providing candidates, well in advance of the interview, with either a topic for oral presentation or a specific interview question.
7. Providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates after the selection interviews, as an opportunity for the applicant's professional growth.
8. Preparing the interviewing team not only for their tasks of developing criteria, interviewing, and evaluating, but also on human rights legislation, Ministry directives, and board policies; and an awareness and implications of systemic discrimination within the selection process.
9. To have interview teams balanced in terms of gender representation.
10. Trustees and senior administrators working together to identify and remove arbitrary, artificial, and unnecessary barriers resulting from traditional personnel practices which have had the effect of restricting promotional opportunities for women.

This area is addressed by most of the boards. Boards are attempting to ensure that all recruitment, selection, and hiring policies and procedures allow equal employment opportunities to both women and men.

III Policies and programs directed specifically to and at women employees

The third type of policy statement deals with affirmative action policies, policies directed specifically to and at women employees. They are listed below, from general to specific:
-- To diversify the occupational distribution of women throughout the system;
-- To increase the representation of women in positions of responsibility where under-representation has been identified;
-- To recognize, develop, actively encourage, utilize, and monitor the leadership potential of female staff in order to progress towards a more equitable male-female balance in positions of added responsibility; and
-- To promote and encourage among women a feeling of confidence and 'partnership among equals' within the employment milieu.

Examples of initiaitves or programs directed to or at women are listed below.
1. Setting annual numerical targets for promoting women to supervisory officers, principals, and vice-principals.
2. Monitoring that women are being promoted, trained, and compensated equally by:
a) Maintaining a list of "staff statistics" of projected positions, positions applied for, and positions that women and

men hold within the board, i.e., positions of added responsibility, grade levels, subject areas where applicable and the number of males and females holding degrees, principals' certificates and supervisory officers certificates.
b) Tracking women and men through their careers within the school board.
3. Comparing the internal occupational distribution of women with the appropriate external female labour force data.
4. Compiling and maintaining a list of resource people to act as role models to be available as required.
5. Providing opportunities for women to become qualified for various positions, including opportunities to gain related work expience through internships, delegation, job rotation, special assignments, etc.
6. Providing educational and career counselling for women.
7. Encouraging women to nominate themselves for promotion or professional development opportunities.
8. Advertising positions of added responsibility in a way that encourages qualified women to apply.
9. Encouraging supervisory staff to identify women with the desire and potential to assume positions of responsibility.
10. Having seminars on such topics as self-defeating attitudes in women, management skills for women, pay equity, financial planning, family law act, communication -- speaking and listening, humour in the workplace, assertiveness training, pornography discussion.
11. Holding Status of Women conferences. An annual event, with speakers from outside education, dealing with such issues as moving toward increasing the participation of women in the political arena of Ontario; changing one's attitudes; an opportunity to share ideas and concerns; to have women make some options for themselves.
12. Providing a facility and logistic support for a Women's forum. Ongoing regular meetings, giving women the opportunity to meet and learn from other women. Presentations of topics have included time management and management techniques used by women in business; changing dynamics of marriage and sexual harrassment help women to see that they need not quietly accept their fate, but must initiate their own appropriate solutions; to help women understand the vital role they can play in the decision-making process; to receive basketball coaching, to give women expanded roles in their schools; to help women examine the barriers preventing them from achieving full potential; and preparing for retirement.
13. Investigating and responding to the child-care needs of board employees.

IV Policies and initiatives aimed at eliminating systemic discrimination.

The fourth and final type of policy statements deal directly with the issue of eliminating systemic discrimination. Those policy statements are, once more, listed below with the more general statements first leading to the more specific statements:
-- To identify and eliminate systemic discrimination;

-- To eliminate the barriers inhibiting women being acknowledged and promoted in the board;
-- To bring about the removal of any institutional and/or procedural impediments (real or perceived) to the advancement of women and minority groups within the board;
-- To discourage the perpetuation of sex role stereotypes;
-- To raise the consciousness of all the staff on the impact that their attitudes and behaviours have on the development potential of staff and students; and
-- To sensitize the board's organization to the position of women, past and present, and to the potential contribution of women in the organization.

Programs to identify and eliminate systemic discrimination within the school system are enumerated below:
1. Non-sexist communications or the use of inclusionary language are mandated throughout the board, and school principals are held accountable for ensuring its implementation.
2. Suggestions and directives issued to all curriculum areas with the intent of eliminating sex role stereotyping with students.
3. Increasing staff awareness of employment equity in each school through such means as:
-- monitoring assignment of tasks given to students,
-- use of sexist language,
-- stereotyping in curriculum and in texts and library books,
-- encouraging male and female staff and students to take on traditional opposite roles, e.g., male cheerleaders,
-- team male and female staff members when coaching sports,
-- include women in history,
-- have a Career week -- to have women and men identified with and speak on non-traditional occupations, and
-- implement "Gifted timetabling", where more classes to have the opportunity to experience scarce female (or male) role models.
-- Math and science conference for female students -- to increase the awareness about the opportunities for girls in math and science related careers. This conference is also directed towards parents and teachers, to encourage them to discuss the field of science and math as rewarding and highly recommended, and to clarify for students the expectation of a career in these areas.
-- Project Mentor: an extension of the program above. A business/industry/education program with women from participating companies provide mentorship to students in elementary and secondary schools (and their parents). Mentors are assigned proteges. The mentors discuss the demands and rewards of their job, explain education and training requirements, show proteges what the job is like, and talk to students at schools upon request.
4. School staff examine practices and attitudes which affect staff, students, and programs adversely.
5. Identifying and implementing ways to encourage a more balanced representation of men and women in both the elementary and secondary panels.
6. Establishing some means within the organization, through a person or a committee, to respond to concerns or complaints of

individuals, groups, or of Federations, with respect to barriers to equal opportunity, if such have not been overcome through consultation at the school level.
7. At the board level, examining system barriers, in order to explore reasons why women are less likely than men to qualify and apply for these positions. This exploration would include finding answers to the following questions:
-- Are there changes to the jobs themselves that would make them attractive to more women (and men)?
-- Do family/home responsibilities discourage women more than men from considering these positions?
-- Do women postpone career advancement because of family responsibilities?
-- Would workplace childcare during and day and evening help make these jobs more appealing?
-- Would a less hierarchical, more co-operative management approach appeal to more women?
-- Do young women enter the teaching profession with different aspirations than men?

More examples of affirmative action/employment equity activities as taken by school boards that reached maximum eligibility under the incentive fund in 1987 can be found in pages 56-61 of the 1988 Ministry report on the status of women.

E Conclusions

Given the above mentioned activities of the school boards, this section will report some of the accomplishments of the boards in terms of employment equity/affirmative action for women. First, the 1988 report published by the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario told of the advances made by the Ontario school boards:

1. Of the 77 public boards, 57 (74%) have made use of at least some of the Ministry's Incentive Grants.
2. Of these 57 boards, 43 submitted reports to the Ministry, and from these respondents only 8 (19%) have an affirmative action coordinator assigned full-time; the remaining 81% have officers assigned from 10-90% of the time.
3. The 26 of the 41 boards (63%) which employ an affirmative action coordinator either full or part-time, indicated that the position is term. Most of these board did say, however, that the affirmative action program would continue as a part of their ongoing human resource planning and management practices.
4. Only five boards (12%) have included the objective of at least 30% female representation in all job categories by the year 2000.
5. Only five boards (12%) have established numerical targets for the hiring and promotion of women.

Next, the Honourable Chris Ward, Minister of Education, at the March 1989 Focus on Leadership conference summarized the progress of the Ontario school boards in terms of employment equity. He said, "The minimum objective set in 1986 was 30% [women in all positions in education by the year 2000]; the 1988 statistics [for the percentages of women in these leadership positions] are: superintendents 10%, secondary school principals 11%, elementary school principals 17%, secondary school vice-principals 19%, elementary school vice-principals 34%."

Despite his strong suggestions to the school boards and the Ministry's overall employment equity/affirmative action policy, Ward noted that the representation of women in these line positions of school leadership was low. Accordingly, to further promote employment equity within school boards, Ward announced several changes. Following Bill 69, an Omnibus Bill to amend the Education Act, and Policy/Program Memorandum 102, all Ontario school boards, as of September 1990, would be **required** (rather than **requested**) to establish and maintain a policy of affirmative action with respect to the employment and promotion of women. Moreover, the chief executive officers of school board would be required to include an section on employment equity in their annual reports to the Minister of Education. As well, Ward raised the target from 30% to 50% female representation by the year 2000 in the positions of supervisory officer, principal, and vice-principal. To ensure that employment goal is met, he planned to appoint a Minister's panel, to audit periodically school boards' employment equity policies and plans, to publish the school boards' employment equity achievements, to have the school boards submit their annual employment data and projected vacancies, and to ensure that programs of certification for supervisory officers and principals reflect employment equity.

To summarize, employment equity/affirmative action policies and initiatives of the Ontario school boards which have been described herein, are intended, ultimately, to "provide an environment that exemplifies sex equity." The research has revealed that a plethora of programs do exist: general employment equity programs, programs aimed at ensuring that the recruitment, hiring, selection procecedures are fair and just, affirmative action programs, and programs to reduce systemic discrimination -- those glass ceilings and walls that prevent women from having a truly equal opportunity within the organization. In this regard, the Ministry's objective of gender equity in terms of role models is being addressed. However, the quantitative data indicate, on the other hand, that gender equity is far from being achieved within the Ontario educational system. Perhaps this research which shows the variety within each of these four types of programs that are being carried out under the rubric of employment equity will assist, albeit indirectly, the school boards in attaining their overall objective -- that of providing an environment to the students that truly reflects gender equity.

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